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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

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Statement

Introduction

1. We strongly urge Governments to actively strengthen their commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme Action of the World Summit for Social Development on the "promotion of the goal of full employment as a basic priority". Consistent with the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, we propose the following:

(a) That youth[1] including youth without parental care have right of access to education, training and employment in decent jobs[2] that prepare them for participation and contribution as adults in society;

(b) That the fulfilment of children's rights to survival and development depends on economic support primarily provided by full employment and work that respects the human dignity of and provides a living wage for their parents, grandparents or other caregivers;

(c) That youth, including those without parental care, and adults have the right to freedom from work that is harmful to their health or to their physical, psychological, spiritual, moral or social development;

(d) That youth and their parents or other caregivers have the right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, socio-economic status, and language.

Critical concerns within a human rights framework

2. Youth access to education, training and employment: a little over ten years ago, the United Nations General Assembly called upon governments to ensure a decent education and job opportunities for young people to lift them out of poverty and protect their health. Although a number of Governments have submitted national plans in response to the World Programme of Action for Youth (1995), more Governments need to develop these plans and all Governments need to move assertively towards implementation and the submission of periodic reports of progress. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right to education at the primary, secondary, and higher levels as well as vocational information and guidance. It provides a multifaceted design for education, including preparation for a responsible life in a free society.

3. Youth with disabilities are almost always substantially less likely to start school, and in many countries have lower transition rates, resulting in lower school attainment than that associated with gender, rural residence, or economic status. Intervention with this specific vulnerable population is, therefore, critical. Appropriate rehabilitation services, accommodation and support services are needed to ensure their access to education, training and employment.

4. The Secretary-General, in his report on the follow-up to the world programme of action for youth (A/62/61-E/2007/7), presents appalling statistics regarding the

[1] Throughout this statement we have adopted the United Nations General Assembly definition of "youth", as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive.

[2] Jobs which provide respect for human dignity. International Labour Organization Convention No. 87 defines decent work as productive work in which rights are protected and which generates adequate income.

unemployment of youth. While youth represent half of the 192 million estimated unemployed persons globally, their rates of unemployment are higher and they hold a smaller share of decent jobs. High rates of unemployment and low rates of decent jobs expose youth to poverty and vulnerability to exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, engagement in armed conflict, and drug trafficking which lessen their psychological health and long-term productive earning capacity. Sustainable social development requires that youth, including those without parental care, be educated, trained, and employed in decent entry jobs.

5. Full employment for parents: the report of the Secretary-General on promoting full employment and decent work for all (E/CN.5/2007/2) states that unemployment and underemployment have worsened and that over a billion persons working do not earn enough to get themselves and their families out of poverty. Psychological research has shown that the conditions of unemployment and underemployment are resulting in generations of families entrenched in poverty[3] which is detrimental to mental health and psychological well-being.[4] The fulfilment of children's rights to survival, safety, development and participation depends largely on full employment in decent jobs with a living wage and benefits including access to health care for their parents, grandparents or other caregivers. This fact is supported by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

6. The significance of parental employment for children's development is also supported by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) which recognizes "the right to work ... [and] to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular, remuneration which provides all workers, as a minimum, with ... a decent living for themselves and their families ..." Because women have persistently higher unemployment rates than men, gender equity in employment and the economic empowerment of women are crucial to the development of children, families, and communities.

7. Human trafficking: trafficking taken as a form of work, rather than a violation of basic human rights, must be condemned and eliminated as a major global concern that affects countless numbers of children, youth and women. Neither the report of the Secretary-General on promoting full employment and decent work for all nor the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the world programme of action for youth addresses this serious form of human rights violations. Children and youth, including those without parental care, who are trafficked are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. Accurate statistical data on the numbers involved in trafficking, either as victims or perpetrators, are both scarce and unreliable and research is sorely lacking on the health, physical, and psychological impact of trafficking on children and youth. However, drawing from psychological research on child maltreatment and victimization, we expect these effects to be quite negative indeed.[5] Once again, the Convention on the Rights of the Child names human

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[3] Thompson, T. and Hupp, S. (Eds.). (1992). *Saving children at risk: Poverty and disabilities.* Newbury Park: Sage.

[4] Mandershild, R. W. and Sonnenschein, A. (Eds.). (1994). *Mental health: United States.* Washington, D.C.: Center for Mental Health Services.

[5] Rafferty, Y. (in press). The impact of trafficking on children: Psychological and social policy perspectives. *Child Development Perspectives.* Bottoms, B. L. and Quas, J. A. (Eds.) (2006). Emerging Directions in Child Maltreatment Research. *Journal of Social Issues.* Washington, D.C. Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

trafficking as a violation of human rights and requires State Parties to act aggressively to prevent it.[6]

8. Discrimination in education and employment: there is limited attention in both the report of the Secretary-General on promoting full employment and the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the world programme of action for youth on discrimination in education and employment. Altogether, both reports acknowledge that there are continued inequalities in education, training, and employment among racial, ethnic, gender and disabled groups, especially discrimination of girls, and ethnic minority, indigenous and disabled youth, which results in continuing high rates of poverty among them, thereby limiting their survival, safety, development and social participation. The various human rights standards, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, call for the end of discrimination, and the Beijing Platform for Action and the Durban Programme of Action identify goals and policy and programmatic strategies for the reduction and elimination of racial, gender, and religious discrimination in education and employment.

9. Recommendations:

(a) We call upon those governments who have not developed action plans for the health, education and employment of young people in response to the World Programme of Action for Youth (1995) to do so with a sense of urgency and with the full participation of youth, paying special attention to youth without parental care, and urge all governments to implement these plans and to submit periodic reports of progress;

(b) We urge all governments to develop and implement policies for the creation and implementation of full employment and decent work with a living wage for parents, grandparents or other caregivers, especially those living in poverty, in order to allow them to properly attend to the survival and development of their children, with access to health care;

(c) We call upon governments, particularly those with high rates of poverty, to prioritize and implement programmes for the education and training and the creation of decent work with a living wage for parents, grandparents or other caregivers, and to integrate these programmes within their national plans for economic and social development;

(d) We urge governments who have not yet done so to establish and implement laws and policies to stop the involvement of children and youth, including those without parental care, in all forms of labour which are hazardous to their survival, safety, health, education and psychological and social development.

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[6] According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, "State Parties shall take all appropriate ... measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form, ... protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare, ... promote physical and psychological recovery and reintegration of a child victim, ... recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous to or interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development ..."

We further urge them to recognize that trafficking of children and youth for sexual exploitation and involvement in armed conflict is a violation of human rights and human dignity which must cease;

(e) We call upon governments to provide specialized interventions and adequate and appropriate services for children and youth who have been trafficked and involved in armed conflict, hazardous labour or sexual exploitation, in order to address their physical, psychological, social, and educational needs, including reintegration into their families, schools and communities;

(f) We call upon governments to especially target children and youth and caregivers of children and youth, who are continuing victims of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, religion, disabilities, sexual orientation or gender identity, providing them with full access to education and training that prepares them for full economic, social and political participation and that allows them to have decent employment and income;

(g) We call upon governments to establish and maintain procedures for the valid and reliable gathering and evaluation of statistical data for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the education, training, employment and remuneration of youth and parents or other caregivers, including grandparents, disaggregated according to gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, religion and disability status;

(h) We call upon governments to provide policies and programmes that address the disability aspects of education, employment and accessibility, rehabilitation, health and social protection in order for the promotion of inclusion and decent work to be successful.

Note: Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: International Association of Charities, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent of Paul, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Dominican Leadership Conference, Elizabeth Seton Federation, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Council of Psychologists, International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, International Women's Anthropology Conference, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, SOS Kinderdorf International and UNANIMA International.